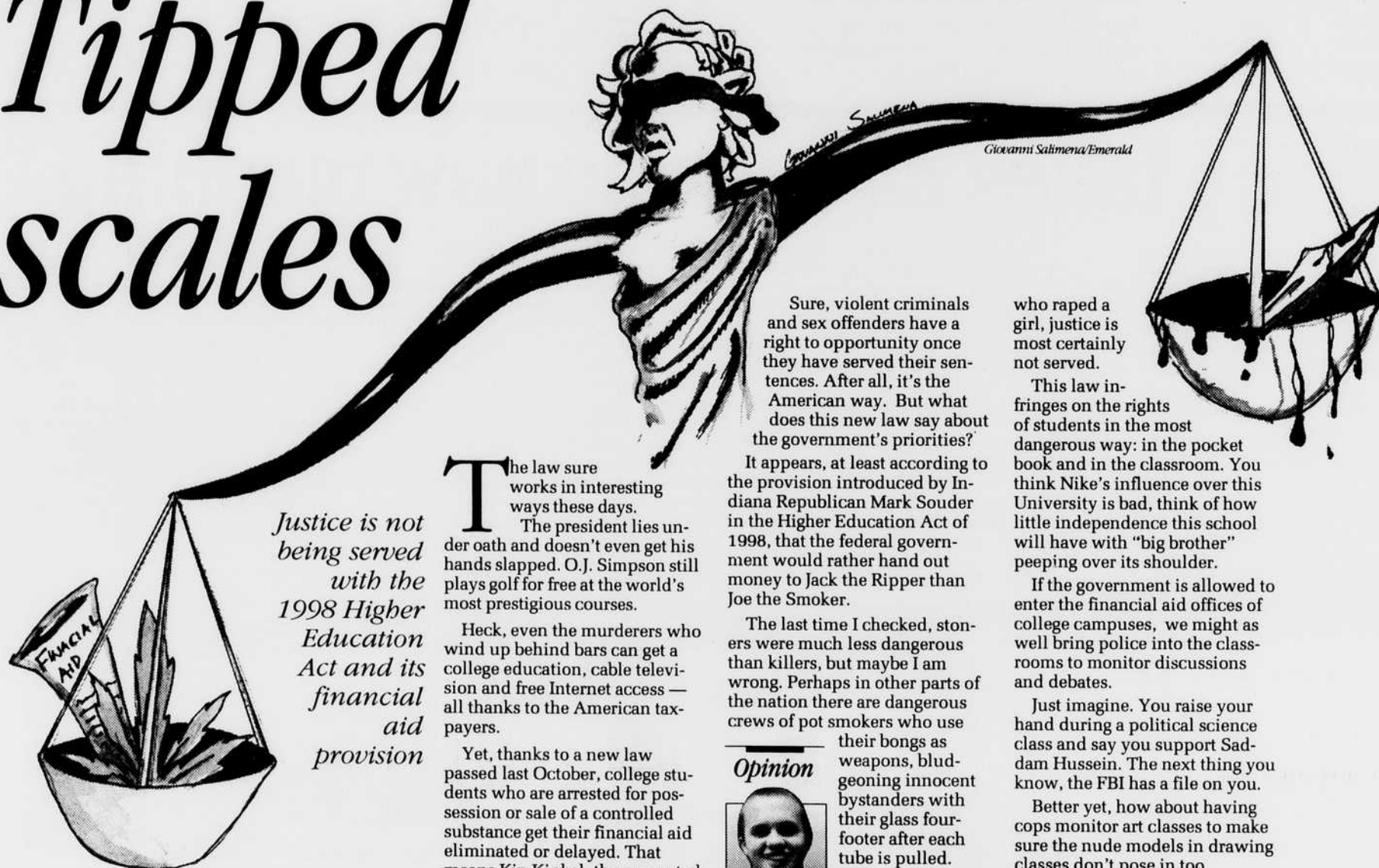


PERSPECTIVES

Tipped scales



Justice is not being served with the 1998 Higher Education Act and its financial aid provision

The law sure works in interesting ways these days. The president lies under oath and doesn't even get his hands slapped. O.J. Simpson still plays golf for free at the world's most prestigious courses.

Heck, even the murderers who wind up behind bars can get a college education, cable television and free Internet access — all thanks to the American taxpayers.

Yet, thanks to a new law passed last October, college students who are arrested for possession or sale of a controlled substance get their financial aid eliminated or delayed. That means Kip Kinkel, the suspected Thurston High gunman, can get a free diploma while students who get caught with a bag of dope will have to work their asses off to pay for tuition.

Wait, it gets even better.

Currently, there is no law that prohibits students convicted of murder, rape or any other non-drug related crime from receiving their financial aid. The next time you apply for financial aid, even if you have been convicted of rape or murder, you will only be asked about previous drug-related offenses.

Sure, violent criminals and sex offenders have a right to opportunity once they have served their sentences. After all, it's the American way. But what does this new law say about the government's priorities?

It appears, at least according to the provision introduced by Indiana Republican Mark Souder in the Higher Education Act of 1998, that the federal government would rather hand out money to Jack the Ripper than Joe the Smoker.

The last time I checked, stoners were much less dangerous than killers, but maybe I am wrong. Perhaps in other parts of the nation there are dangerous crews of pot smokers who use their bongos as weapons, bludgeoning innocent bystanders with their glass four-footer after each tube is pulled.

Sure, more serious drugs such as methamphetamines, cocaine and heroine cause crime all over the world. Marijuana-related crimes are also quite prevalent. And in no way am I advocating the legalization of drugs. In fact, this law wouldn't bother me quite as much if it was more balanced in its condemnation of criminals.

But when a kid who got busted for slanging pot in high school is judged more harshly than the kid

who raped a girl, justice is most certainly not served.

This law infringes on the rights of students in the most dangerous way: in the pocket book and in the classroom. You think Nike's influence over this University is bad, think of how little independence this school will have with "big brother" peeping over its shoulder.

If the government is allowed to enter the financial aid offices of college campuses, we might as well bring police into the classrooms to monitor discussions and debates.

Just imagine. You raise your hand during a political science class and say you support Saddam Hussein. The next thing you know, the FBI has a file on you.

Better yet, how about having cops monitor art classes to make sure the nude models in drawing classes don't pose in too provocative of a position. If they do, then the policeman could slap an indecent exposure charge on them.

You get my point?

The last thing the government should be able to do is base their judgment for providing financial aid on the personal lives of the applicants. It's McCarthyism, it's wrong and it's our job as students to fight this law until it dies.

Aaron Artman is a columnist for the Emerald. His views do not necessarily represent those of the newspaper.

Opinion



Aaron Artman

Letters to the Editor

No vote unfair

If I understand the issue (ODE, Feb. 11) correctly, you have advised students across campus to just go ahead and mark "no" on all upcoming ballot measures regardless of their content. This is completely unacceptable.

Student parents at the University are only able to attend, greatly, because of the child care we receive. If this is taken away or detracted from, it will be extremely difficult for people with children to attend the University. This issue has a bit more impact on peoples' lives than the OSPIRG fluff going on, and it is unfair that child care issues should be lost in whatever else is going on.

If the Emerald does mean to encourage students to vote against further funding of the University child care program, there are quite a few of us who would like to know why! Has any research been done to investigate what that money would be used for? Was any thought put into that article at all? Were any possible repercussions discussed or even pondered?

Please, Emerald, don't let us lose faith in you! Set things right as soon as you can!

Brandy J. Collins
Anthropology

A vote for OSPIRG

The staff of the LGBTQA has happily chosen to endorse OSPIRG for the special election. We feel that OSPIRG is a vital part of this University and that all students benefit from OSPIRG's dedication to environmental and human-rights issues. When OSPIRG fights for clean water and student fees, they are fighting for all of us. This University is known nationwide for the political activism of its students, and OSPIRG plays a vital role in that activism. OSPIRG has organized chapters all across Oregon and given students a voice in Salem as well as on a national level. It is our hope that OSPIRG will be reinstated on this campus.

LGBTQA Staff
University

Media favoritism

Picture this: A major Division I basketball team with only two conference losses, in

contention for its conference title, has been setting attendance records all season long and has had two of its players named all-conference players of the week. Now that is something to be proud of, no?

And to top it all off, this team upset the seventh-ranked team in the nation by 27 points in front of the third largest crowd in the team's history. You might expect to see a front page story or at least a picture of the spanking they gave the seventh-ranked team. Not terribly difficult to picture.

Well, let us paint you the real picture: The team described above is the University of Oregon's women's basketball team. And what kind of media coverage has this team gotten from our campus paper? Well, on the Monday after the women soundly won their Civil War battle, the Emerald proudly displayed screaming Beaver fans who were ecstatic about their team beating our struggling men's team (ODE, Feb. 1). The coverage of the women's victory was covered on page nine. Add insult to injury with Friday's Emerald (ODE, Feb. 5), which did not have a front page story or picture of

the women's convincing win over the UCLA Bruins, but instead covered the story on page 11. If you ask me, this is not a pretty picture.

Stephanie Carnahan
Student Life

ROCK THE VOTE

With its Web site redesign, the Emerald also launched an interactive poll. The poll will be updated every Sunday with a new question. This week's question is: Should the Constitution Court allow the special election to continue? Make sure to vote by web at www.dailyemerald.com.

CORRECTION

In the Feb. 22 article, "Student remembered by friends and family as caring, spirited," it should have read that Valerie Knutson was a member of Alpha Phi Omega, the campus service group. The Emerald regrets the error.